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Government Irrigation

The following extracts from a folder re-
cently issued by the Malaga Land and Im-
provement Co., will be read with interest.
A few slight changes have been made in
the composition and arrangement.

A History of the Proposition

The progressive American citizen is ever looking
for an opportunity to better his condition, and in pur-
suit of that object he is constantly changing his loca-
tion; for years he has been setting his face to the
westward in his search for land and liberty.

The first great advance was made across the mid-
dle west; later the tide veered to the northwest and
a vast domain was occupied; more recently the ad-
vance has been directed toward the southwest and a
great region heretofore given over to the long horns
has been invaded; this wide scope of country that
had for many years been considered of no value ex-
cept for grazing has been seized by the farmers, the
ranchmen have been steadily forced back and a won-
derful transformation has resulted. Desert plains and
treeless valleys have been changed to fruitful farms.

In no part of the southwest has this transformation
been more remarkable or the efforts of the farmers
crowned with more abundant success than in the Pe-
cos Valley of New Mexico.

It is to this last mentioned district that especial at-
tention is invited. A correct understanding of condi-
tions as they now exist under the Project near Carls-
bad requires a short review of the history of irriga-
tion in this locality. Some fifteen years ago certain
people conceived the idea that it was possible to store
and distribute the waters of the Pecos river as to
supply water to irrigate a large scope of country
along the river and below Carlsbad. Surveys were
made and it was found that with a proper system of
reservoirs and canals about 40,000 acres could be
brought under irrigation.

At that time a greater portion of the land to be
affected by the project was public domain and sub-
ject to entry under the desert land law as it then ex-
isted. This permitted the acquiring of title to com-
paratively large tracts as each adult member of the
family could enter an entire section.

Investigation having shown that the irrigation pro-
ject was feasible, a company was organized, the re-
servoirs and canals were constructed, and the work of
reclamation was commenced. In a short time the
lands that could be irrigated were entered under the
desert land law and title acquired by means of the
water supplied by the Irrigation Company.

In the course of a few years a very large per cent



A Pecos Valley Cotton Patch

Until a few years ago this valley was believed to
be utterly unfit for agricultural purposes; it was con-
sidered to be a cowman's paradise, but farming—never.
Roswell and Eddy (now Carlsbad) were both
old towns before the thought of farming in the Pecos
Valley had progressed very far. After a time, however,
it was discovered that the soil of the
valley was naturally fertile and that a proper applica-
tion of water would develop its latent productiveness.
Then it was that the progressive American citizen
began his invasion. His conquest is now nearly
complete; a few years more and this once barren
valley will be one continuous garden and orchard;
the home of thousands of prosperous, contented,
and happy people. The secret of this remarkable
transformation that is now in progress is found in one
word: Irrigation.

Prior to the coming of the farmers the Pecos Val-
ley had attracted some settlers; some degree of de-
velopment had been attained. This had been done,
however, under the old idea that this was a stock
country only; and as the chief desire of the stockman
is for room, lands were held in large tracts and evi-
dences of development were isolated. These exten-
sive holdings are now being broken up and the lands
are passing into the hands of the homebuilders.

This transition makes this old country new; it gives
it all the opportunities of a new country coupled with
many of the advantages of older settled localities. It
has good markets and good schools; every communi-
ty has its church.

Irrigation

The portion of the Pecos Valley that is now being
brought under systematic irrigation lies across the
counties of Chaves and Eddy; a distance of about
one hundred miles. This district is naturally divided
into three parts by the sources of its water supply.
First, the Hondo Project near Roswell; second, the
proven artesian belt extending from Roswell to Lake-
wood, and third, the Carlsbad Project located near
Carlsbad. In the first, water is obtained by storing
the flood waters of the Hondo river; in the second,
water is obtained from artesian wells, artesian water
being found at depths ranging from 300 to 900 feet
the wells being put down by the individual land own-
ers; in the third, water is obtained by storing the
waters of the Pecos river and using the normal flow
of Black river. This is also a Government Project
and is one of the greatest irrigation systems in the
world.

the dams on that river and completely wrecked the
irrigation system. This loss was greater than the
company could stand and all effort to supply water
was abandoned.

This apparent failure, however, was in no way
due to the want of fertility in the soil or insufficiency
of natural water supply; it was the result of a poorly
constructed irrigation system—the undertaking was
too big for the company.

Soon after the dams were destroyed the attention
of the government was called to the project and its
possibilities. Experts were sent into the field and as
a result of their examination and reports it was de-
cided that this was a proper place for the application
of the provisions of the Reclamation Act. Accord-
ingly the Government undertook the work of furnish-
ing to this valley a substantial and permanent irriga-
tion system. The result has been the construction of
the largest irrigation system in the southwest. This
plant has been repaired and perfected by the Govern-
ment and the sum of \$600,000 has been expended
on the undertaking; water was ready for delivery on
April 1st, 1907. Last year there was ample water
for 20,000 acres only; other lands will be added
from time to time as the water supply and general
conditions will warrant.

The maintenance of the system and the distribution
of the water will be in charge of Government engi-
neers, thus assuring permanence, stability and absolute
equality in the administration of the affairs of the sys-
tem. Water has now been allotted to 20,000 acres
and this was done under government supervision.

Title and Soil

Before water was allotted to any specific tract the
matter was examined by an engineer, a chemist and
a lawyer, each acting for and on behalf of the Gov-
ernment. A favorable report from each of the three
was required before water was assigned to that par-
ticular tract of land, so that when you buy a tract of
land to which water has been assigned you may be
sure of three things: First, that it lays so it can be
irrigated; second, that the soil is such as to make it
worth irrigating, and third, that the title is perfect.

The government does not deal directly with each
land owner, but requires the water users to form
themselves into an association known as the Water
Users Association; this association is incorporated and
has a capital stock of 20,000 shares. The contracts
with the Government are made by the officers of this
association and the officers are elected by the mem-
bers of the association; each water user subscribes for
as many shares of stock as he has acres of watered
land and the value of the stock is \$30 per share; this
is payable in ten annual payments of \$3 each, without
interest; the money realized from the sale of this
stock goes to the Government to replace the money
advanced to put in the system; when it shall have all
been paid in, the water users will be the owners of
the water and water rights, but these water rights
will run with and belong to the land to which they
are allotted. Under the provisions of the reclama-
tion law, water from the Government systems can
only be furnished to resident land owners, and then
not to exceed one hundred and sixty acres to any
one owner; this provision effectually does away with
the tenant farmers and the large holdings. Non-resi-
dents cannot obtain a water right. It is provided,
however, that no land owner shall be debarred from
the use of water until he shall have been in default
for more than two years; this gives ample opportuni-
ty for the prospective resident to arrange his affairs
and take up his abode in the irrigation district.

Both the old Irrigation Company and the Beet
Sugar Company, in consideration of having water
assigned to their lands have signed contracts agreeing
to reduce their holdings to the legal limit within two
years and to sell such land to parties who are quali-
fied to take and use the water of the irrigating sys-
tem. This has placed these large holdings on the
market and is opening the country to settlement; it



Rapids in Black River near Malaga